



Second Interfaith Conference on Childhood Hunger

Hosted by the Virginia Synod, ELCA
Wednesday, 18 November 2015 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM
L. Douglas Wilder Library, Virginia Union University
Richmond, Virginia 23220

Initial Synthesis from Recorded Thoughts...

"But Jesus said to them... YOU give them something to eat!" [emphasis added!]

Is there a common advocacy we can agree to?

- General consensus was achieved for this body representing the family of faith throughout Virginia to **refine and advocate** for a **Virginia Universal School Breakfast Act**. The initial draft bill with conference notes is enclosed to this synthesis.
- **No need for the church to wait** on the state for legislation -- **find and feed hungry kids now!**

What tools can we use to influence legislation in the Commonwealth?

- **Successful advocacy entails collaborations and coalitions**
- **Many individuals and groups saying the same message**
- **Engage but do not annoy legislators**
- **Write letters on a first-name basis**
- **Honor the legislative aides and secretaries**
- **Focused asks, well-crafted and well-researched**
- **2016 Advocacy Days:**
 - *Annual Meeting of VICPP - December 8, 2015*
 - *Day for All People of Faith January 20, 2016 at Virginia Union University*
 - *United Methodist Day – February 4, 2016*

Next Steps!

- **Launch press release** reporting on conference actions (Kayla)
- **Announce location and time** for 16 December reconvening of the conference (Eric)
- **Develop written input on Universal Breakfast Bill** through working groups as organized by Charles (see next page for details) to be presented in plenary session on 16 December 2015 (Julie and Charles)
- **Find patron and staff Universal Breakfast Bill** into the legislative process of the Commonwealth (Charles and Julie)
- **Craft and release Virginia Feeds Kids Monthly Newsletters** for redistribution through March of 2016 (Eric with redistribution by all)
- **Encourage clergy** to make special emphasis on childhood hunger in sermons during the December - February timeframe (Judicatory heads as asked by Jim Mauney and Jon Barton)
- **Develop and present regional learning opportunities** on summer and weekend feeding programs in order to equip congregations to start such ministries, with initial learning and planning session scheduled in late January 2016 (Eric and Eddie)

"I was born into a poor family with 4 children. We drank hot water for breakfast as there was no food. Children need food to be able to learn and grow. We must show compassion for our youngest citizens!"

Parishioner, Resurrection Lutheran in Spotsylvania

LEGISLATIVE WORKING GROUPS and TASKS

These working groups meet electronically after Thanksgiving as guided by Charles and Julie. The groups and their tasks are shown below. Groups present their work on 16 December when the conference reconvenes in plenary session.

Charles Swadley - Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy - charles@virginiainterfaithcenter.org

Julie Swanson - Lutheran Family Services of Virginia - jswanson@ifsva.org

LEGISLATOR PATRON COMMITTEE

Tasks:

- 1) determine best potential patrons for the bill*
- 2) work with patron to craft the language of the bill*

WHITE PAPER COMMITTEE

Tasks:

- 1) draft white paper to outline the rationale*
- 2) obtain substantive results of the West Virginia legislation*
- 3) find out any other attempts by other states for similar legislation*

ENDORSEMENTS

- 1) talk to lobbyist (Becky Bowers Lanier) for guidance in developing strategy*
- 2) identify organizations and associations (key contact persons)*

TITLE 22.1. EDUCATION

Chapter 13. Programs, Courses of Instruction and Textbooks

Article 7. Universal School Breakfast

§ 22.1-250. Breakfast in the Classroom

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Virginia Universal School Breakfast Act. **§22.1-250.** This act provides expanded nutrition opportunity beyond the provisions of §22.1-207.3 (School Breakfast Program) to provide breakfast for all children enrolled in schools throughout the Commonwealth.

A. The Legislature of the Commonwealth of Virginia finds and declares that:

(1) All school children need to have nutritious meals in order to achieve their potential. Providing the best schools and teachers alone does not ensure a child is mentally present and able to learn. A growing body of research establishes that hungry children are less able to process the information provided and less likely to be attentive to the lessons being taught.

(2) President Harry S. Truman began the national school lunch program in 1946 as a measure of national security to safeguard the health and well being of the nation's children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities and other food. The Virginia Department of Education reports that 42% of our children are eligible for free and reduced meals, that 120.6 million school lunches are served to students annually in public schools, but that only 45 million breakfasts are served (VDOE School Nutrition Program Statistics & Reports 2014-2015).

(3) Research shows that healthy eating, proper nutrition and regular physical activity result in students who have: (a) Increased standardized achievement test scores; (b) improved attendance; (c) reduced tardiness; (d) improved academic, behavioral and emotional functioning; and (e) improved nutrition. For many students, the nutritious breakfast at school is an essential part of their daily nourishment. In April, 2013, the West Virginia Legislature passed Senate Bill No. 663, the West Virginia Feed to Achieve Act. Executive Director, Richard Goff, from the Office of Child Nutrition, sent a memo, October 23, 2013, to each County Food Service Director in West Virginia. Within the note he writes, "successful breakfast programs can be an essential part of student well-being and academic success. Research consistently shows that children who eat a well-balanced breakfast perform better on standardized tests, have higher math scores, and lower rates of absenteeism and tardiness. Therefore, the Legislature is placing the nutritional needs of its WV children at the forefront by declaring that an effective school breakfast program is not an interruption of the school day, but an integral and vital part of that day."

(4) Schools that provide universal breakfast programs also report: (a) decreases in discipline and psychological problems; (b) decreases in visits to school nurses; (c) decreases in tardiness; (d) increases in student attentiveness; (e) increases in attendance; and (f) improved learning environments, and these positive attributes are furthered through comprehensive healthy schools policies that include quality nutrition, integrating physical activity during the school day, and teaching children about the importance of a healthy active lifestyle (Share Our Strength's Breakfast Report 2013).

(5) As determined in West Virginia, universal breakfast can be an integral and vital part of the school day (USDA School Breakfast Program and nokidhungry.org School Breakfast Programs)

(6) The participation rate for the school breakfast program varies greatly among our districts. Those districts which have made a determined effort to increase participation by offering programs to best meet student needs, such as Grab-And-Go Breakfasts, providing Breakfast in the Classroom, or providing Breakfast After First Period, feed higher percentages of their students (VDOE School Nutrition Program Statistics & Reports 2014-2015).

(7) Despite the provisions of §22.1-207.3 (School Breakfast Program), many students are currently not eating breakfast -- either at home or at school.

(8) In order to maximize each child's potential to learn and develop, the Legislature, schools and communities must partner to provide the most basic support for learning: nutritious meals both breakfast and lunch.

(9) In order to maximize student participation in breakfast, and to reduce the secondary adverse impacts of poverty, it is important that schools provide nutritious meals without risk to students as being stigmatized as poor.

(10) The opportunity for all students to break bread together in the classroom as part of the normal homeroom routine provides all teachers and children an opportunity to not only receive nourishment, but

in the act of sharing a meal to build the habit and discipline of healthy living in community. Teachers should view the breakfast learning opportunity as a time to teach and share life experiences over a shared meal.

(11) Private and nonprofit sectors have shown a willingness to commit significant resources to addressing hunger in America, leveraging federal programs and enlisting their employees, customers and clients to improve the availability and accessibility of affordable, healthy food for those school districts in need of assistance.

(12) Public schools in this state and others have adopted continuum of policies to implement low cost, effective programs that include physical activity, physical education, proper nutrition and the promotion of healthy eating habits, along with involvement by school staff, families and communities. A variety of resources to assist schools in adopting and implementing these programs are easily accessible on the internet through the Virginia Department of Education.

B. It is not the intention of the Legislature to allow or encourage parents to abdicate their parental responsibility related to providing healthy, nutritious meals for their children. However, it is the intent of the Legislature that no child be denied nutritious meals, and that a supplemental breakfast or snack be shared together in the classroom prior to each day of learning.

C. Funding for breakfast in the classroom shall be apportioned from all available resources in accordance with Chapter 8 (Public School Funds) of Title 22.1 (Education) of the Code of Virginia. In order to maximize the economies of scale and to access all available federal, state, and local funds to support our school nutrition programs, this Act directs schools to make available a light supplemental breakfast to be eaten in the classroom for all pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade students. Counties shall creatively manage and apportion Public School Funds to provide priority for universal breakfast available to all students at no cost to the students.

D. The Legislature encourages state and district boards of education to enter into public-private partnerships to provide free nutritious meals (both breakfast and lunch) for all pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school children in Virginia. Private schools are also encouraged to provide universal breakfast for all students in order to create more favorable conditions for day of learning. All schools are encouraged to creatively apply all available Federal and State funding for reimbursement of feeding costs.

E. It is the intent of the Legislature that healthy nutritious school lunches be made available to all students in a manner that maximizes participation and minimizes stigma attached to participating students from low-income families.

F. Each district's board of education shall:

(1) Require all schools to adopt a delivery system no later than the start of the 2017 school year, which ensures all students are given an adequate opportunity to eat breakfast. These delivery systems shall include, but are not limited to, Grab-And-Go Breakfasts, Breakfast in the Classroom or Breakfast After First Period.

(2) Provide universal breakfast to all students beginning with the start of the school year in 2017, but not require the students to eat if they choose not to.

(3) Collaborate with the state Office of School Nutrition to develop strategies and methods to increase the percentage of children participating in the school breakfast and lunch nutrition programs, and to share ideas for breakfast-time learning.

(4) Determine and report the number of children in each school who participate in each meal offered by the school; the number of children who are not eating each meal offered by the school; and the total daily attendance to the Office of School Nutrition by July 1st of each year for the preceding school year.

INITIAL COMMENTS on 18 NOV 2015 for further consideration and development:

1. Drill down on finances
2. Identify like-minded advocacy groups with family building emphasis - supplemental
3. Find out West Virginia results
4. What about universal lunch?
5. Increase of 50% with universal breakfast (Kim Yucha)
6. Education piece is needed
7. Emphasize county control vs state control
8. CEP (Community Eligibility) thresholds – highlight these
9. Healthy food is a relative term – define using federal standards
10. Time constraints on classroom dynamics
11. Presenting options for those not in the program – universality
12. Pragmatism of legislation – A-e contain information but is not directive – flotsam
13. Find patron wrapped in a way that is palatable
14. When giving mandates – legislators will seek opinions of stakeholders
15. Clearly articulate financial piece – avoid flags for appropriations
16. Feeding takes lower priority over feeding in the educational culture
17. Cultural dietary restrictions (medical too)
18. Drop all West Virginia references – put in white paper but not in the legislation
19. More specificity on eligibility
20. More specificity on public-private partnerships – business too
21. Financial considerations paramount
22. School takes on burden of universal breakfast – setting minimums based on CEP
23. Alternative delivery option doesn't burden school fiscally
24. Encourage public-private partnerships with nutrition education, gardening, after-school programs
25. Bring in teachers as stakeholders for their input and championing
26. Address waste issues (Jon Barton)
27. Expect pushback from local school districts to unfunded mandate.
28. Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) is a key stakeholder to embrace
29. Conduct pilot program at elementary school level to gather momentum
30. Provide cost-analysis in white paper with “whereas” statements.
31. Possible patrons of legislation to be approached:
 - Delegate Chris Peace (R-97)
 - Delegate Kirk Cox (R-66)
 - Delegate Sam Rasoul (D-11)
 - Delegate Greg Habeeb (R-8)
 - Senator Louise Lucas (D-18)
 - Delegate Mark Keam (D-35)
 - Senator John Miller (D-1)
 - Senator Donald McEachin (D-9)
 - Delegate Israel O'Quinn (R-5)
 - Delegate Delores McQuinn (D-70)
 - Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41)
 - Senator Bryce Reeves (R-17)